



## **Wounded Spirits, Ailing Hearts 4 Family Factors Written Video Transcript**

Unfortunately, PTSD impacts other areas of veterans' lives as well. The American Indian Vietnam Veterans Project showed that Southwest and Northern Plains veterans report more physical health problems and think of themselves as being in worse health than do white, Black or Hispanic veterans. PTSD symptoms affect both conditions. [00:00.20.00] The more PTSD symptoms a veteran has the more health problems he experiences the worse he feels about his health and the more likely he is to seek medical care. We'll return to the implications of this interaction between PTSD and physical health status because it foreshadows the importance of [00:00.40.00] consultation liaison relationships with primary care providers. Veterans with PTSD often find that the ordinary but troublesome problems of daily life are compounded by their illness. The participants in the American Indian Vietnam Veterans Project frequently told us that finishing school, [00:01.00.00] finding a job, holding a job, having sufficient money to live on, difficulties with the spouse and children and trouble with the law plagued them in general. For veterans with PTSD these problems were quantifiably worse. Combat exposure is the predominant cause of PTSD among [00:01.20.00] Vietnam veterans but other factors influence how severe PTSD may become. Peter, can you share several examples from your clinical experience?

(Spiro), the Indian and Native servicemen I've treated frequently mention their need for family and community support. On one hand [00:01.40.00] some Native families found the Vietnam War difficult to understand for it didn't directly threaten their lives or their well-being. Family and friends at home didn't know how to ask about the veteran's experiences overseas. When veterans returned from Vietnam they believed no one was interested in them. And because of the nature [00:02.00.00] of PTSD the tendency for isolation, anger and unpredictability veterans often turned away sincere offers of help and understanding.

My anger just got out of control. I have hurt people, [00:02.20.00] even my own relatives. And all I have to show for it is just physically is a beat up body and some of my own relatives [00:02.40.00] won't even talk to me to this day because of the anger during the drinking.

I was angry all the time. I don't know why. When I came back from the service, I mean Vietnam, I have that anger all the time, every day. I didn't know what's wrong, I didn't know why I was angry for it though. [00:03.00.00] (Soon) my wife and my children notice it, you know. I was always angry. From there my family didn't kind of don't bother me, they stayed away from it, you know. Then just I have a hard life with my family (going) just given all this anger, you know. [00:03.20.00]

Other families and communities have found ways to reach their veterans, often through longstanding ceremony that honor their sacrifice and accomplishments.



We used traditional ceremony too and that really helped him. We had our (enemy way) ceremony and we had a beautification way [00:03.40.00] for him. And then ... and I guess I was just there for him all the way, no matter how far he (tried to) get away from me I was always there with the kids and he knew I was strong for him, so he came back.

My family and I we get together and [00:04.00.00] we talk about let's have a (prayer done) in Navajo traditional way, not (enemy) way or either have a blessing way or have some kind of singing done so that would help him. And he goes [00:04.20.00] along with us.

So, we've seen many veterans overcome PTSD and its consequences with help from family, cultural traditions and other resources in their communities such as the VA.

Yes, but there's no easy solution. And access to care for PTSD and related problems varies enormously [00:04.40.00] in terms of geography, the type of service required and the system offering it. For example, among the Navajo in the American Southwest the nearest VA hospital and significant specialty services are located in two large cities hundreds of miles from the reservation. It makes ongoing, routine [00:05.00.00] or time sensitive care much more challenging. As you'll recall, Peter, in the American Indian Vietnam Veterans Project we paid careful attention to the nature and extent of the participant's use of VA, IHS and other private providers. Those included state and private hospitals, treatment centers or clinics [00:05.20.00] and private physicians. Forty six percent of these Native American Vietnam veterans reported that they had used the VA, IHS or other sources of care within the past year for physical ailments. Despite the fact that three fourths of these veterans had an alcohol, drug or [00:05.40.00] mental disorder only 16% sought care for those problems. And despite the closer proximity of IHS facilities, veterans were much more likely to seek help from the VA for alcohol, drug and mental health problems. Looking separately at the Northern Plains and Southwest communities, [00:06.00.00] the services veterans used varied by location, notably the VA facilities, which were closer to veterans in the Northern Plains than veterans in the Southwest. The vast majority of Indian veterans who sought care from the VA told us that the treatment they received was good or excellent for physical illnesses as well as [00:06.20.00] alcohol, drug and mental health problems. Veterans gave the IHS good or excellent marks as well, though not quite as high as the VA. Veterans offered these reasons for not seeking help from agencies. They believed that the programs were too far away. They used other health care. They wanted to solve their problems on their own. [00:06.40.00] They didn't believe their problems were serious enough. They didn't believe treatment would help. They felt that the agencies didn't offer the care they needed. They didn't trust providers or programs. They felt there was too much red tape. They believed the quality of care was poor. They worried about what others would think. [00:07.00.00] They didn't believe they were eligible and they worried about racial prejudice.

[end of audio]

